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News Brief

Sussex County responds to Superior Court ruling rejecting sheriff's lawsuit

Georgetown, Del., March 19, 2013: Delaware Superior Court Judge T. Henley Graves late today issued a ruling agreeing with Sussex County government that Delaware's sheriffs do not have the constitutional authority to make arrests, the latest outcome in a years-long debate over the duties of the elected office.

In a 10-page ruling, Judge Graves rejected Sussex County Sheriff Jeffrey Christopher's assertions that he and his deputies are empowered by the Delaware Constitution to act as law enforcement authorities and make arrests. The ruling follows a lawsuit Sheriff Christopher filed last year against the County and State, after the Delaware General Assembly passed legislation specifically barring sheriffs and their deputies from making arrests or carrying out other law-enforcement activities.

In response to the Superior Court ruling, County Council President Michael H. Vincent issued the following statement:

The County is pleased with Judge Graves' decision in the sheriff's legal challenge. The court's decision only serves to affirm what the County Council, the State Attorney General's Office, the Delaware General Assembly, and most Sussex Countians have known and said all along – that Delaware sheriffs and their deputies are not constitutionally instilled with the powers of arrest or law enforcement authority. While this may not signal the end of the argument, the County is hopeful it will lay the groundwork in settling this long-running saga once and for all.

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For Immediate Release